PC 16

November 10, 1964

To: J. Lee Rankin

From: Alfred Goldberg

Subject: Organization of the Commission Files

The eventual organization of the Commission's files presents a number of problems which will have to be resolved before the files can be made accessible to the public.

1. A large portion of the total materials in the files is classified and will remain classified until the originating agencies take declassification action. This classified material is scattered throughout the files and to separate it from the unclassified material will probably require page by page examination of all of the materials in the files. This problem has been complicated by the extensive cross-filing system.

2. A considerable number of documents in the files have been declassified by the originating agencies or by the Commission and the documents should be stamped accordingly. This, too, will require a considerable search effort.

3. Many of the unclassified documents are reports from the FBI and the Secret Service which are not normally available to the public until the originating agencies choose to make them so. The FBI apparently has a 75-year rule on its reports and other materials.

4. Many of the documents--especially the FBI and Secret Service reports--contain information that is derogatory and defamatory. Many of these documents are not classified. Some are being published in one form or another. Some of the Commission Exhibits have been changed in order to eliminate or minimize the derogatory and defamatory statements. It seems obvious that if we publish some of this information it should also appear in the open files of the Commission. On the other hand, is it desirable or necessary to retain in the open files the many other documents which contain such information?

5. A number of documents--especially from the State Department--have been declassified by simply painting out certain items of information. This has been done, of course, specifically for documents being used as Commission Exhibits. Since the information

omitted is still classified, it will not be possible to permit the originals of these documents to remain in the open portion of the Commission's files. This will require, therefore, use of a copy of the original, which conforms to the published exhibit, as the document in the open file.

6. Some of the correspondence concerning declassification of documents probably contains information which is classified. There may appear in this correspondence the actual material which is deleted from the document being published. This would, therefore, permit people having access to the Commission files to reconstruct the original classified document. It may be necessary, therefore, to place such items in the classified files.

7. It is likely that the file open to the public will consist essentially of the Hearings, the Commission and Deposition Exhibits, which will have been published, and the correspondence of the Commission.

8. It seems likely that it will require the efforts of a substantial number of people working for perhaps months to arrange the Commission's files in accordance with requirements. It behooves us, therefore, to resolve the problems mentioned above and to give the Archives as precise guidelines as possible in carrying out the job.

AGoldberg/smh

cc: Mr. Rankin
Dr. Goldberg